DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 081 328 HE 004 478

AUTHOR	Ashworth, Kenneth H.
TITLE	The Pauper and the Prince.
PUB DATE	Jan 73
NOTE	15p.; Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges, San Francisco, California, January 15, 1973
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Administration; *Educational Finance; *Educational Responsibility; Federal Aid; *Government Role; *Higher Education; *Institutional Role; Speeches

ABSTRACT

This speech discusses the growing Federal involvement in higher education and its impact on institutional autonomy. As there is no alternative to further increases in aid to higher education from the Federal government, higher education institutions must take note of the leverage this will provide to the government. Since many values in higher education are dependent upon institutional autonomy (academic freedom, quality, and diversity), institutions must identify their goals upon which they will stand without compromise to protect their autonomy. Institutions must protect their principles realistically against all sources of funds. An additional threat to institutional goals and priorities may be the establishment of a national department of education that could subordinate education to the State. (Author/PG)

ED 081328

PRESENTATION

at

ANNUAL MEETING

of the

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES

January 15, 1973

San Francisco Hilton Hotel

"The Pauper and the Prince"

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

by

Kenneth H. Ashworth
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
The University of Texas System

Session: "The Growing Federal Involvement in Higher Education and Its Impact on Institutional Autonomy"

HE 004 478

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

At the outset I should say that it has been called to my attention that the puns intended in the title of this talk are lost to some. If a pun is the lowest form of humor, it can be made still lower if it has to be explained. Therefore, I will not do you the favor of explaining it, for as Machiavelli said in another connection, favors conferred "are profitless, because they are seen as being forced, and so they earn no thanks."

However, the theme I will take might be clarified by moving up from the pun to the limerick. I would take some poetic license with Don Price's little doggeral:

> There was a young pauper from Kent,
> Who said she knew what it meant
> When the Prince took her to dine,
> Gave her cocktails and wine.
> She knew what it meant, but she went.

In Texas recently one of our Regents found himself involved in a prolonged but fruitless argument with the faculty when he was quoted widely as saying that the faculty was not autonomous. I suppose his major oversight was in not pointing out that the Board of Regents also is not autonomous (an oversight easily excused in a Regent). At least those of us in administration have no illusions about just how much autonomy we possess.

I open in this way merely to make the point that just as Galbraith says there is no such thing as gratitude between

social institutions, there is no absolute autonomy among social organizations. Autonomy is relative in the sense that Malinowski states that there is no such thing as "free-floating freedom"; there is only freedom in the context of the social structure in which one exists.

Therefore, to address the topic of the federal government and the autonomy of higher education is to consider relative positions and to define desirable relationships. What is desirable for higher education in that relationship can best be defined in terms of the values, goals, and traditions established through experience during the history of higher education. I will return to this topic of values and goals a little later.

Governments may reflect societies in both their good and their bad aspects. Higher education in America has been helped immensely by governmental influence for good. One component of freedom in a society is access by individuals and organizations to the products of that society to fulfill their goals and meet their needs. The federal government has in part provided to higher education the wherewithal to make advancements, to develop, to improve and to extend its services to a broader segment of society. Few in higher education would deny the good that the federal government has done in this area to extend the freedom of higher education to fulfill its purposes.

Also the federal government has served to protect higher education against encroachments of state governments. Examples of the fulfillment of this role of protecting the relative autonomy of the weaker institution against the stronger are the Dartmouth College case and the case of Pierce vs. the Society of Sisters. But the subject of state government and higher education is the subject of another panel, and I will not pursue that topic.

The entry of the federal government into providing large amounts of aid to higher education is, in my judgment, irreversible. There are many reasons for this, but I will touch briefly on only a few. First, higher education has a much lower rate of increase in "productivity" than the general economy. This has remained true even with the introduction of audio-visual equipment, computers, television, programed instruction, and other devices and techniques for more efficient teaching and learning. Second, the competing demands for state funds for other programs are making it more difficult for higher education to obtain the support it needs. It should be noted that a number of these state programs competing for funds have been established at increasingly higher levels of expenditures set by matching inducements from federal programs. Third, most state and local tax structures are more regressive than the federal tax structure, and therefore

state and local tax revenues run behind increases in the economy. Fourth, higher education has been caught by inflation, and costs have increased irresistibly for faculty, operations, libraries, equipment and facilities. Fifth, there has been a decrease in the percentage of current income coming from voluntary giving, and some philanthropic foundations are shifting their focus away from higher education to social programs. Sixth, the colleges and universities have been pressed and enticed into accepting more students and undertaking more social service programs without sufficient support for related and unavoidable additional institutional costs.

If, in fact, there is no alternative to further increases in aid to higher education from the federal level, we must take note of the leverage this will provide to the government. This, of course, brings us to the key issue I have been asked to address: the autonomy of higher education vis a vis the influences of large federal aid programs.

But before I turn to this topic it is only fair to warn you that in order to give emphasis to the points I wish to cover I will exaggerate the "them" and "us" relationship between the federal government and the colleges and universities. This is done for quick clarity under the restrictions of time available. It is from a mutual recognition and understanding of several of the issues I will raise that we may in fact

avoid a "they" and "we" split in defining the ends we pursue and the means we use to obtain them.

If the power to tax has been called the power to destroy, we might also say that the power to provide financial assistance may become the power to destroy. It is possible that in the years ahead, if institutions let themselves become heavily dependent upon federal aid, the federal government may be in a position to practice a form of educational euthanasia by withholding such aid. While it is conceivable that the federal government could withhold aid for ideological reasons, I do not envision this happening under our present system of government. However, there is an entirely plausible future in which the federal government may realistically have to face the question of allowing institutions of higher education to close. The federal grants and loans programs for construction in recent years have provided incentives for schools to enter into long-term indebtedness on bonds to be retired over the next several decades by student fees and other sources of income. Harold Gores of the Educational Facilities Laboratories has pointed out that the cost of a building represents only about five percent of the cost of what will go on in that building over a thirty to forty year period. If the projections of enrollments for the 1980's materialize as predicted (and there is little margin for error since we are dealing with current live births), enrollments in some schools may drop to

the point where the debt service on the bonds cannot be met and the level of operating costs in the facilities cannot be maintained. This may become an especially serious problem for private institutions if new state institutions continue to be created and existing public colleges and universities continue to expand. Under such circumstances federal agencies may face the problem of deciding whether to permit institutions to fold.

I passed over quickly the prospect of the federal government acting to withhold funds on ideological grounds to force an institution to conform or collapse. Neither such overt action nor palpable control of an institution need be of major concern currently. However, what should be of concern to institutions presently is piecemeal encroachment and the impalpable influence of government upon an institution under large government programs. The real possibility is not outright government control, but the loss of the will for self determination by the institutions. Each institution needs to develop its own countervailing power to prevent government agencies from weakening its autonomy. It is not enough to trust the federal government to exercise self-restraint in dealing with higher education. This would be an abdication to the government of the responsibility for self protection. The colleges and universities themselves need to identify those ineluctable values and purposes that are fundamental to their remaining independent institutions

of higher learning rather than becoming government agencies or contractors. Although institutions can take steps to protect themselves individually, they can increase their effectiveness through their national associations as well. Much can be accomplished through the enlightened, persistent, and nagging voices of organizations such as the Association of American Colleges.

I would suggest a few of those values in higher education which are dependent upon institutional autonomy. First is the freedom of knowledge and academic freedom. Second is the maintenance of quality in higher education despite pressures to apply an egalitarian philosophy to higher learning. When costs rise sharply and funds become more limited it is difficult to pursue both goals simultaneously. Third is the need to maintain diversity among and within institutions. Fourth is the right to refuse to undertake public service or research activities or "social agency" types of projects which might be inconsistent with the objective and non-political role of the university. It is with the commitment to these values that we may discuss the desirable relationships between government and higher education to maintain the relative autonomy of the latter.

If it is appropriate and necessary for institutions to look to themselves for the protection of their autonomy, they must identify their goals, recognize clearly the principles

upon which they will stand without compromise, and set priorities on what their responsibilities are to themselves as institutions of higher learning and to the society. And to avoid the possibility of becoming indentured servants they must project their goals and priorities realistically against all sources of funds. Once these steps are taken the institution should establish appropriate procedures for the review of contracts, grants, and loans against the rational plan of the institution. Programs with matching requirements, start-up funds, pull-away provisions, or long-term indebtedness should be carefully examined. Other items for which terms and conditions should be screened are commitments for new programs or organizational units not in the institutional plan, restrictions on publishing, large scale production or manufacturing, action-oriented programs not related to the role of the institution, tenure commitments, and narrowly defined projects which have little educational or investigatory merit. The procedures should require a prior review on proposals in order to avoid the presentation of faits accomplis by faculty members and federal agencies. The federal agencies--and faculty members as well--cannot be faulted for attempting to involve institutions in a wide range of types of programs and activities but they need not always succeed.

I would add one word of caution about the misuse of autonomy. If colleges and universities act under the guise of

autonomy to attempt to all become national research institutions, they will invite the intervention of government agencies and legislatures to control their developments. Too many institutions continue to add doctoral programs at the expense of what they can do best and what their students need most. With a period of slower growth ahead for higher education, we must abandon the habits and re-examine the goals established in the 1960's. We need to be much more discriminating in adding graduate programs, and we need to stop comparing graduate programs as the major criteria for measuring excellence.

On the subject of the responsible exercise of autonomy, institutions should not be surprised at public,political, and government reactions to failures to put our own house in order, Specifically, I refer to the need for the conviction and the ability by institutions to respond effectively to campus disorder which interferes with personal freedoms and results in the destruction of property. I refer also to the expectations that institutions and faculty may be held accountable for their use of public funds without legislatures being accused of intruding upon academic freedom. And I refer to the need for institutions to define their educational goals and somehow, within their system of fragmented decision-making, take actions to modify their programs within the resources they may realistically expect to receive. Any informed and thinking person contemplating the decade ahead in higher education

must come to the conclusion that our resources will be at best stabilized, possibly reduced, and certainly diluted in their availability to institutions and programs. It is ironic that in the very institutions in which we prepare students for dealing with future contingencies and preach the need for controlling our social and physical environments, we see so little preparation to meet the coming crisis. I fear that many of us will wait until we are in the midst of the crisis before we begin to act, which in some cases will be too late to save the institution. From this I must also conclude that in failing to take sufficient steps on our own, we invite the federal and state governments to exercise leverage to obtain modifications which in their judgment are necessary and which, on occasion, will unfortunately not be those we would make were we to take our own actions to control our destinies.

There is one development currently under consideration which would, in my judgment, be highly undesirable in changing the relationship between the institutions of higher education and the federal government. The creation of a Department of Education could have a serious impact on the autonomy of colleges and universities. Such a department would concentrate governmental power, would probably lead to increased attention on manpower planning to the detriment of general education, would probably result in greater emphasis on applied research to the detriment of basic research, and, in Clark Kerr's words,

would substitute bureaucratic balance in programs and funding for intuitive balance. Equally as important, the broad base of support under legislative programs originating in nearly every committee in Congress would be eroded as appropriations and program legislation were considered by fewer committees. If the diversity of support for higher education is being weakened in part due to the large increases in federal support, we should at least protect the diversity of agency and program support within the federal government.

But all of these concerns about the effect of creating a new department for education are secondary to one that I believe deserves the most serious attention. The price of obtaining administrative neatness and more efficient control would be the loss of a portion of the present protection of institutional autonomy. The present fragmented form of federal aid insulates higher education from overt or planned or accidental interference by the government as a whole in institutional decisions. The leverage of the government would be much greater if all or most education programs were concentrated in one federal agency. With most government power on higher education programs concentrated in one agency, it would be easier for the government to play an ignoble role in a period of national stress than under the present organization. Even a transitory aberration of some severity in social attitudes could result in the loss of institutional

freedoms which took centuries of struggle and experience to establish. We should not organize our educational programs at the fed ral level in a way that makes our colleges and universities more readily exposed to subjugation at the very time when their independent voice may be most needed.

Therefore, I recommend that in addition to establishing internal procedures for protecting those salient values fundamental to higher learning, the colleges and universities take an active role in opposing the establishment of a Department of Education at the national level. No social institution has the qualifications or the responsibility of higher education to recognize that it transcends government interests and must survive governments in order to serve society. Forms of government may change, the organization of an economy may change, the organization of interest groups and guilds may change, the form of monetary exchange may be modified, but if higher education becomes a creature of the state, the most useful ideas originating in the quiet study of the story of mankind and the consideration of alternative courses of action will be subordinated to the new order. Whether the university could avoid becoming a salesman and maintain its role as critic in a sharply modified social structure remains to be seen. But we owe it to those who follow to have maintained for them an organizational structure under which they might have a better chance to at least make the effort.

I must return before closing to a point that I made at the outset. I wish to acknowledge that I have not been sufficiently generous in recognizing the interests of the federal government in the issues I have discussed. We would not have arrived at the beneficial relationship which currently exists if there were not far more issues upon which we agree than we differ. Our present government reflects society in its desire that the universities remain free. The people, and the government as a servant of the people, appreciate the need for centers where there are perspective, objectivity, honesty, useful criticism, the generation of new knowledge, a location for the concentration and application of the nation's best and most analytical minds, and a place where individuals are prepared for participatory roles in social decision-making. Karl Jaspers summed this up in his address at the 500th anniversary of the founding of the University of Basel as follows:

> Scientific research, performance of technological service, recollection of the past, formative participation in what is handed down, all this is excellent, but it is not enough. For the calm that is allowed at the university exists so that we may experience the storm of world events in our hearts and thoughts in order to understand it. The university ought to be the place where there is the clearest consciousness of the age, where that which is uttermost attains clarity, be it that in one spot, at least, full consciousness of what is taking place is achieved, be it that this clarity, working out into the world, shall provide assistance.

I opened with the observation that to discuss institutional autonomy is to discuss desirable relationships between the government and the colleges and universities. And the question of what is desirable depends upon defining the values and goals fundamental to higher education generally and to individual institutions specifically. The test we in the institutions and our colleagues in the federal government will face in this decade of more limited resources is whether we will be procrustean or protean in the way we adapt to the situation. The primary responsibility for how we respond, however, rests with our institutions of higher learning.